

“Paré recommends that women not look at monstrous things during intercourse or prior to the ‘formation’ of the baby... Twisted hands or feet, humps or other deformities are the direct result of the bad habits of the mother...” such as wearing clothes that are too tight (56). Because knowledge regarding reproduction remained largely unchanged from the Middle Ages through to the sixteenth century, the treatment of pregnant women often was based on misinformation and age-old notions rather than solid scientific fact.

Chapter three describes the struggle for midwives to improve their skills and maintain their role in the delivery of babies. The gradual education and regulation of midwifery in the 1800s made it possible for midwives to care more effectively for women. This section also describes the rampant infection that killed many parturient women in hospitals: as many as one woman in fifteen died in the best years, one in ten in the worst years.

In the final chapter, the author describes “Precursors of Modern Obstetrics” whose knowledge seems no greater than that of earlier physicians. Illustrations of obstetrical instruments, such as the speculum and forceps, underscore the readiness of doctors to intervene in childbirth. Drawings of the female anatomy remain rudimentary and flawed. Indeed, it is difficult to perceive any progress in obstetric medicine. *Born to Procreate* is useful as an introduction to the history of medical practice as it pertains to women in France. It provides insight into cultural practices that shaped the medical treatment of women, and outlines the evolution of women’s role as caregiver of women. Unfortunately, excessive typographical errors distract the reader, lending an air of amateurism to the book.

Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity, and the Struggle to Raise Our Sons

O’Reilly, Andrea, ed.
New York and London: Routledge, 2001.

Reviewed by Fiona Joy Green

Over a decade ago, during a rare speaking engagement in Winnipeg, Gloria Steinem advised a sold-out audience that “we need to raise our sons more like our daughters.” While the violence of boys and male youth experienced in the Columbine shootings and other such horrific actions had not yet occurred, Steinem’s analysis was not new to me. Since the birth of my son fourteen years ago, I have been raising him with the conscious understanding that the mother-son relationship as proscribed by patriarchy is limited, damaging, and dangerous. Sadly, feminist scholarship has continued to focus on mother-daughter relationships, almost to the exclusion of mother-son relationships.

Thanks to Andrea O'Reilly, who has edited and contributed to *Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity, and the Struggle to Raise Our Sons*, the dearth of scholarship on mother-son relations is being addressed. Based on papers presented at the 1998 Conference of the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) on "Mothers and Sons: Challenges and Possibilities," this 280-page publication introduces readers to a healthy selection of exciting and important feminist scholarship on mothers and sons. Eleven chapters are grouped into three separate, yet interconnected, sections united by recurring topics such as feminism, mothering, masculinity, ethnicity, war, peace, and nurturing. One of the greatest achievements of this collection is its attempt to balance diverse theoretical approaches and theories with personal narratives that explore various elements of mother-son relationships.

In the first section, "Mothering and Motherhood," authors demonstrate how positioning themselves as critics of the master narrative of motherhood enables them to challenge the oppressive elements of the institution of motherhood and to redefine mothering for themselves and for their sons. Mary Kay Blakely describes, with humour and poignancy, some of the ways in which she personally has deconstructed the institution of motherhood through her need to model truth and authenticity for her son. Claudette Lee and Ethel Hill Williams add to this understanding in their critique of the myths and realities of mothering from a black feminist perspective. They illuminate the need for African-American mothers to instill in their sons an awareness of a racially oppressive society and their need to be agents within that society. The importance of peacekeeping and peacemaking, first introduced by Jacqueline Haessly in her personal narrative of mothering sons with special needs, is explored by Linda Rennie Forcey in her reflective discussion of mothering and the art of peacebuilding. Andrea O'Reilly's brilliant analysis of three feminist approaches to mother-son relationships concludes the section. Drawing on recent contributions of Anglo-American and African-American feminist theorizing on mothers and sons, O'Reilly explains the shift in feminist theorizing about mothering from maternal erasure and disconnection to maternal presence, agency, and authority. As motherhood "outlaws," each writer substantiates how mothers are able to be autonomous beings as they foreground their mother-son relationships.

The second section, "Men and Masculinities," addresses the complexity of the interplay between feminism and mothering that has generally remained on the fringe of feminist scholarship. For example, Alison Thomas demonstrates how some feminist mothers who attempt to encourage alternative and positive manifestations of masculinity often face opposition from various elements of the dominant culture (such as the school system, the mass media, their peers, and at times the fathers of their sons) and, as a result, must deal with their own ambivalence and anxiety. Sharon Abbey explores the influence of feminist academic mothers on their sons' masculinity and Jess Wells examines the struggles and challenges lesbian mothers face in raising male children. In the

last chapter, Andrea Doucet investigates the challenges faced by men who cross into maternal work when attempting to father in ways that benefit women, men, girls, and boys. Each article illustrates the multiple ways in which feminist mothers are committed to understanding and challenging the damaging aspects of “normative patterns of male socialization and traditional definitions of masculinity.”

The final section, “Men and Masculinities and Mothers and Sons: Connections and Disconnections,” advances discussions introduced in the earlier sections and provides practical examples of how mothers are engaged in positive relations with their sons. Each of the four chapters challenge the widely held belief that mothers and sons must be disconnected or detached psychologically from one another if boys are to develop successfully into men. Drawing on examples from their workshops and clinical work, Cate Dooley and Nikki Fedele openly challenge this belief. Through the use of their own alternative parenting-in-connection approach, they demonstrate how mother-son relationships can be different across childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Janet Sayers addresses the damage sons often experience through the loss of early attachment to their mothers, reconfirming the need for a parent-in-connection approach to mothering sons. In “Mother-Son Relationships in the Shadow of War,” Amia Lieblich reflects on the mother-son connection/disconnection that occurs due to obligatory military service in Israel. Lieblich makes a convincing argument for the need and support of those individualist and feminist mothers who publicly challenge the status quo by speaking of their attachment to and need to be connected to their dead sons who have been lost in war. The final chapter is written by the lone son and only male author in the book. In a moving tribute to his mother, Douglas Sadao Aoki explores the ways in which his subjectivity as a son, brother, father, and husband are connected to his motherline. He generously shares with the reader the gift of Japanese calligraphy that his mother, June Yuriko Aoki, has given him and his son. In so doing, he highlights how his mother’s language and traditional writing foster his ongoing connection to her, to his paternal and maternal grandmothers, and to his maternal great-grandmother. Including the experience and theorizing of a son is a fitting end to this fine and much needed collection of essays on mothers and sons.

Like Andrea O’Reilly, I wonder if my relationship with my son is secure enough “to weather the patriarchal storm” that continually rages around us. *Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity, and the Struggle to Raise Our Sons* attests to the fact that many feminist mothers have long been raising their sons like their daughters, and successfully demonstrates the multiple ways in which feminist mothers counter institutional motherhood by ensuring that their ongoing connection with their sons (and grandsons) remains in the foreground of their lives. It also provides powerful evidence that many other feminist mothers are both struggling and succeeding in creating nurturing and meaningful relationships with their sons—relationships that are resistant to the

patriarchal boy culture that divides sons (men) from mothers (women). People interested in peace studies, family patterns, family relations, gender relations, feminism, psychology, sociology, or women's studies will find this book invaluable to their research and teaching. Those more interested in the struggles of feminist mothers to raise sons in ways that challenge the status quo will also find this collection to be priceless.

My Journey with Jake: A Memoir of Parenting and Disability

Edelson, Miriam.
Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000.

Reviewed by Trudelle Thomas

My Journey with Jake: A Memoir of Parenting and Disability is a vivid, thoughtful account of author Miriam Edelson's ten-year relationship with her son, Jake. At age 34 Edelson is "hard-wired for kids" and is devastated when a doctor announces that her five-month-old son, her firstborn, may never learn to speak, walk, talk, or even eat on his own. Jake is born in 1990 with severe abnormality, lissencephaly, caused when his brain ceased developing mid-pregnancy. The fifteen chapters in this book are an account of Jake's impaired development and of Edelson's journey as a mother under extraordinary circumstances. Included are several black and white photos of the two of them.

The first half of the book tenderly describes Jake's birth and first year of life: his mysterious symptoms, such as low muscle tone and seizures, his diagnosis, the parents' grief process, and their difficult decisions regarding Jake's treatment. They choose several interventions including early surgery, a feeding tube, and residential care. The second half chronicles Edelson's efforts to maintain a strong and loving bond with Jake despite living apart, and her becoming a vocal advocate for the rights of "medically fragile" children in Canada. Along the way, she has a second child (an able-bodied daughter, Emma), lives through an unwelcome divorce, moves in and out of her career as a trade union activist, and deepens her Jewish roots.

What I valued most about the book is Edelson's candour. She presents Jake as lovable, yet she is frank about the enormous challenges of parenting a child with severe medical problems. A fighter by temperament, Edelson at times slides into clinical depression; like so many contemporary women, she must work hard to find ways to keep her balance, including massage, exercise, psychotherapy, and full-spectrum light. I found it easy to identify with Edelson.